



**Wednesday, January 29, 2020**  
**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the City Council**  
**of the City of Palm Springs**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

A Special Meeting of the Palm Springs City Council was called to order by Mayor Kors on Wednesday, January 29, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., at the Palm Springs Convention Center, Primrose A, located at 277 N Avenida Caballeros, Palm Springs, California.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Mayor Kors led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Councilmembers Grace Elena Garner, Lisa Middleton, Dennis Woods; Mayor Pro Tem Christy Holstege; and Mayor Geoff Kors

**Absent:** None.

**City Staff**

**Present:** David H. Ready, City Manager; Jeffrey Ballinger, City Attorney; Marcus Fuller, Assistant City Manager; and Anthony J. Mejia, City Clerk, were present at Roll Call. Other staff members presented reports or responded to questions as indicated in the minutes.

**PRESENTATIONS:**

**A. AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS STANDING COMMITTEE COMMENTS**

Mayor Kors and Mayor Pro Tem Holstege noted that the City was allocated a \$10 million state grant to address homelessness; stated that the City Council is seeking community input on the highest and best use of the grant, noting that it is one-time funding and should be leveraged with partnering agencies.

**B. STAFF REPORT: IDEAS REGARDING HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM PLANNING AND STRATEGIES – BARBARA POPPE AND ASSOCIATES**

Barbara Poppe, Poppe and Associates, Consultant, narrated a PowerPoint presentation summarizing her recommendations for “The Path Forward” approach to addressing homelessness; responded to City Council inquires.

V. Manuel Perez, Riverside County Supervisor, spoke on the County’s efforts to address homelessness; reported on his participation on the Governor’s Homeless Taskforce, noting the importance of a collaborative approach and accountability for ending homelessness; summarized the recommendations of the taskforce.

Greg Wallis, on behalf of Assembly Member Mayes, thanked the City Council for its efforts to improve people's lives and for its partnership to help end homelessness.

Dr. Conrado Barzaga, CEO, Desert Healthcare District, thanked the City Council and the Desert Healthcare District Board for working to address the homeless crisis; spoke on the importance of government and service providers working collaboratively to end homelessness.

Linda Evans, Mayor, City of La Quinta, Chief Strategy Officer for the Desert Care Network, discussed the importance of taking a regional approach towards addressing homelessness and building affordable housing.

Greg Rodriguez, representing the Coachella Valley Association of Governments, reported on the Coachella Valley Homelessness Engagement and Action Response Team (CVHEART) initiative; spoke on the need for a navigation center in the west valley.

In response to City Council inquiry, Ms. Poppe addressed best practices in terms of staffing and management of a navigation center.

### **C. PUBLIC COMMENT:**

Arlene Rosenthal, representing the Well in the Desert, discussed her organization and their need for more space; suggested that the land adjacent to the Boxing Club could be used for an emergency shelter.

Shelley Somerville, spoke about her experience being homeless and the need to expand services at the Well in the Desert and urged Council to use existing resources and service providers.

James Gavin, invited the City Council to tour the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission (CVRM) and Martha's Village as they have operations in place that could be duplicated to help end homelessness.

Maureen Ferriter, spoke about the need for immediate action to help people in crisis.

Mary Ann Estrella, spoke about her experience being homeless; asserted that CVRM is poorly managing the overnight cooling/warming shelter at the former Boxing Club; spoke in support of the services provided at the Well in the Desert.

Robert Silker, discussed his experience being homeless, opining that homelessness is caused by a lack of viable jobs; spoke positively about the services offered at the Well in the Desert and discussed challenges and problems related to CVRM's management of the overnight cooling/warming shelter.

Jase Grimm, opined that the State grant should be used to help create new businesses which create reliable jobs and generate revenues for future programs; suggested that the funding designated for youth services be invested in educational programs.

Linda Barack, representing Martha's Village and Kitchen, spoke on the growing need for respite care for homeless individuals.

Darla Barkett, representing CVRM, spoke in support of a navigation center and motel conversions; spoke on the positive impact of diversion funding to help prevent homelessness.

Cheryl Shannon, spoke about her experience being homeless and commented positively on the services she received at the Well in the Desert.

Brandon Church, spoke about his experience being homeless; commented positively on the services he received at the Well in the Desert and discussed concerns related to CVRM's management of the overnight cooling/warming center.

John Rickert, stressed the importance of funding educational programs for homeless persons.

Tim Sigle, noted that many homeless individuals may be "couch surfing" or have other temporary housing solutions which results in them not being included in the Point In Time Count; urged the City Council to visit the Transgender Health and Wellness Center to learn more about their services and programs.

Thomi Clinton, representing the Transgender Health and Wellness Center, spoke on the needs of the transgender community, noting that traditional homeless shelters may leave transgender persons vulnerable to abuse.

Ed Murphy, voiced support for increasing the capacity to shelter the homeless, noting the importance of stability, safety, security, and support.

Raghda Zacharia, urged the City Council to move forward with projects that can be implemented quickly, effectively, and will have long-term impacts; suggested that the City could purchase a failed housing development in north Palm Springs to shelter the homeless.

Dorothy King, expressed concern that persons are loitering in the field adjacent to the Boxing Club.

Phaedra Nicomede spoke about her experience in a shelter in Bakersfield; discussed the importance of having a safe space for transgender people and commented positively on the services offered by the Transgender Health and Wellness Center.

Kelsey Brooks spoke about the need for a safe space and resources for transgender people and urged Council to take them into consideration.

Carole Rogers, Board Member, Desert Healthcare District, spoke about the urgent needs of the homeless and the need to move forward with all the solutions presented this evening as well as including a proposal for tiny homes.

Angelina Love, discussed the need for programs targeted for the transgender community; opined that some service providers lack sensitivity and competency to help transgender homeless.

Wesley Ross, voiced support for using City-owned to develop housing for the homeless.

Christian Jelmberg, representing Street Life Project Homeless Outreach, spoke out their tiny house campus initiative; suggested that the campus could be dispersed throughout Coachella Valley to help reduce the burden on any particular city.

Isabel, spoke about the special needs of the transgender community; commented positively on the services provided by the Transgender Health and Wellness Center.

Robert Yakas, Adjunct Professor of Architecture, College of the Desert, spoke about a school project focusing on transitional housing; reported they will be developing rapid-deployment bridge housing and suggested that it could serve as a prototype for the City.

Pam Hemmer, spoke on the need for bathrooms, showers, laundry facilities, and mental health services for the homeless.

Jim Bodanza, discussed the need for benchmarks, accountability, work programs, and training for those receiving services and suggested implementing an "Adopt-a-Family" program.

Edward Holzauer, conveyed support for public/private partnerships to address homelessness and then need for more housing, including tiny houses.

Carol Nelson, voiced support for motel and shopping center conversions, noting that they will provide immediate, cost-effective housing.

Alisa Reyes, recommended that the City work to establish a rehabilitation community with integrated services for the homeless.

Patrick Weiss spoke about challenges and flaws with the City's Rent Control Ordinance and suggested that the City Council review and expand the program to help stabilize the rental market.

Gina Chapo, discussed how the community has become impoverished over the years; opined that the government needs to invest in its' people.

Ginny Foat, pointed out that homelessness is an ongoing challenge and that a "one size fits all" approach will not end homelessness.

Victor Beecham, representing Path of Life Ministries, spoke in support of making a collaborative, team effort to help those in the community.

Maribel Nunez, pointed out that the lack of healthcare and housing as the biggest drivers of poverty; voiced support for a regional approach towards addressing homelessness and the development of tiny houses.

Joan Davis, spoke on her experience working with homeless persons; spoke on the importance of addressing mental illness and behavioral problems.

CJ Tobe, Director of Community Health at Desert AIDS Project, recommended that any future shelters or navigation centers be located near a medical facility offering comprehensive, compassionate, culturally-competent care.

George Wolf, suggested that the City Council should allocate funding to assist homeless persons living in vehicles with car repairs and maintenance.

Danny Castillo, voiced support for an integrated management system which would help a homeless person move from crisis to transitional to permanent housing; noted that consideration needs to be given to homeless persons with pets and single fathers with children.

Ashley Boyd spoke about her experience being homeless; pointed out that most homeless persons get sober once sheltered; suggested that buses could be converted to provide mobile showers for the homeless.

There being no others desiring to speak, Mayor Kors closed the public comment period.

## **MEETING RECESS**

The City Council recessed at 8:55 p.m. and reconvened at 9:10 p.m., with all members present.

### **D. CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION:**

In response to City Council inquiries, Ms. Poppe opined that motel conversions are preferable to congregate shelters when considering people with special needs; explained that shallow subsidies can be used to assist individuals who need gap funding to assist with monthly rent or utilities as a means of preventing homelessness; recommended that the State grant should be used to leverage funding from other resources and partners, noting that the funding is a one-time grant and that restraint should be used for projects with ongoing operational costs; recommended that the City utilize a majority of the funding to create permanent “doors” or housing units and then proceed with crisis stabilization projects; pointed out that the homeless have a high need for secure storage and emergency shelters which allow pets.

Mayor Pro Tem Holstege voiced support for creating permanent housing units, investing in innovative housing solutions, and moving forward with projects that can be quickly deployed, potentially using City-owned land or other vacant parcels; spoke on the importance of partnering with other organizations and leveraging matching or other grant funds.

Councilmember Middleton agreed that the funding should be prioritized for permanent, supportive housing units and leveraging it to make investments with other organizations that can bring funding to the table.

Councilmember Garner spoke on the importance of ensuring that housing units are intermixed throughout the community, noting that it helps to remove stigmas and integrates formerly homeless persons into the community.

Councilmember Woods spoke on his experience at the Point In Time Count and agreed with the need for providing secure storage for the homeless.

Mayor Kors thanked Police Chief Reyes and the Police Department for its efforts to help homeless persons; voiced support for continuing to explore a rental assistance program for people on fixed incomes; noted that there is a need for establishing access points in neighboring cities to help connect the homeless to service providers.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The City Council adjourned at 9:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Anthony J. Mejia, MMC  
City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL: 02/27/2020